

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 23217 01 OF 02 101633Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 101600Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6936

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 23217

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR FR US
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FRANCOIS-PONCET

1. SUMMARY: I HAD A LONG AND LARGELY PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION WITH ELYSEE SECRETARY GENERAL FRANCOIS-PONCET. I FOUND HIM, LIKE THE FOREIGN MINISTER, A BIT DEFENSIVE ABOUT PRESIDENT GISCARD'S INTERVIEW IN NEWSWEEK. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE POLITICAL SEASON HAS BEGUN IN EARNEST IN FRANCE AND, THEREFORE, A NUMBER OF THINGS COULD HAPPEN WHICH REFLECT DOMESTIC POLITICS MORE THAN LONG TERM INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. HE CONFIRMED THAT GISCARD IS ANXIOUS FOR THE BARRE VISIT TO BE A SUCCESS AND THAT HE LOOKS FORWARD TO THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT LATER IN THE YEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW I INDICATED THAT WE WERE PUZZLED BY THE APPARENT ACCEPTANCE BY GISCARD OF BREZHNEV'S DEFINITION OF DETENTE. I SAID THAT I HAD HAD SOME EXPERIENCE WITH THE SOVIETS AND I WAS UNAWARE OF ANY AGREED "CODE OF CONDUCT." IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THERE WAS A DANGER IF WE NOW ALLOW THE SOVIETS TO TELL US THAT DETENTE IS IN DANGER WHEN THERE ARE POINTS OF VIEW BEING PUT FORWARD WHICH THEY DISLIKE. I ASKED PARTICULARLY IF THERE HAD BEEN AN
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INTERVENING EVENT OR STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CARTER SINCE THE MEETING OF THE TWO PRESIDENTS IN LONDON WHICH HAD CAUSED GISCARD CONCERN.

3. FRANCOIS-PONCET DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY EVENT, BUT INDICATED THAT THE BREZHNEV VISIT HAD BROUGHT HOME ONCE AGAIN TO GISCARD THE FACT THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN

THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION HAD COOLED CONSIDERABLY AND THAT THIS WAS PERHAPS REACHING A POINT WHERE SOME OF THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF DETENTE WERE IN JEOPARDY. HE THEN WENT ON, HOWEVER, TO DISMISS THE ACTUAL WORDS OF THE INTERVIEW AND RECALLED INSTEAD THE SUCCESS FRANCE HAD HAD IN OBTAINING SOVIET AGREEMENT TO A STRONG COMMUNIQUE WITH REFERENCES TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF IDEOLOGICAL COMPETITION. I SAID THAT THE COMMUNIQUE AND PRESIDENT GISCARD'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS WERE VERY POSITIVE AND THAT IT SEEMED TO US THEREFORE THAT THE INTERVIEW TOOK OFF IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION. WE FINALLY AGREED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS THESE POINTS WHEN PRIME MINISTER BARRE VISITED WASHINGTON AND, FRANCOIS-PONCET ADDED, THAT FOR THIS AND OTHER REASONS IT WAS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE PRESIDENT VISIT FRANCE LATER IN THE YEAR. HE WAS SURE THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD WISHED HIM TO COME, AND EVERYONE HERE FELT SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE A GREAT PUBLIC SUCCESS. THIS HE SAID WOULD STRENGTHEN THE POSITION OF BOTH PRESIDENTS.

4. I USED THIS OCCASION ALSO TO SUGGEST THAT AFTER THE BARRE VISIT WE MIGHT FIND A WAY TO HAVE EXCHANGES ON STRATEGIC MATTERS IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY DIFFERENCES OF OPINION IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA. FRANCOIS-PONCET AGREED, AND I SAID I WOULD BE BACK WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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A PROCEDURAL SUGGESTION FOR DOING THIS.

5. WITHOUT ANY WORD FROM WASHINGTON ON OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE SOVIET ANNOUNCEMENT ON A POSSIBLE SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TEST, I GAVE AS MY OWN PERSONAL VIEW THAT THE SOVIETS HAD HIT ON A STRATEGEM WHICH COULD LOSE THEM NOTHING WHILE CAUSING DIFFICULTIES FOR US IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND POSSIBLY ADDING TO THE PROBLEMS AT THE LAGOS MEETING ON APARTHEID. EVEN IF THE SOVIETS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A TEST IN THE OFFING, AND IF ONE DOES NOT OCCUR, THEY CAN CLAIM CREDIT FOR HAVING STOPPED IT. MEANWHILE THEY DRAW ATTENTION, IN AN UNHELPFUL WAY, TO A CAPABILITY TO LINK SOUTH AFRICA AND ISRAEL. FRANCOIS-PONCET AGREED WITH THIS LINE OF SPECULATION AND ASKED ME TO CONVEY OUR OFFICIAL VIEWS AS SOON AS I RECEIVE THEM.

6. AS A GERMAN EXPERT, FRANCOIS-PONCET EXPRESSED SOME

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 23217

EXDIS

CONCERN ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. HE BELIEVES THAT THERE IS AN UNHEALTHY DEGREE OF NEGATIVE DEBATE AND A WEAKENING OF SCHMIDT'S POSITION AT A TIME WHEN HE SHOULD BE GAINING STRENGTH BECAUSE OF HIS SUCCESSFUL HANDLING OF THE ECONOMY. HE SAID THERE IS INCREASING DIFFICULTY BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER ON IMPORTANT MATTERS OF POLICY, AND HE FEELS THAT A YOUNGER LEADERSHIP IS BEING PREPARED TO TAKE OVER IN THE CDU FROM KOHL. HE SAID ONE OF THE GREAT STRENGTHS OF THE FRG IS THAT LEADERS ARE WELL PREPARED BY EXPERIENCE IN THE LAENDER AND THAT THIS TRAINING GROUND IS LACKING IN FRANCE AND THEREFORE FRENCH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS THIN.

7. FRANCOIS-PONCET SAID THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD IS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE US GOVERNMENT ON THE MITTERRAND VISIT. HE SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO THE OBVIOUS PROBLEM OF MITTERRAND'S ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY, MITTERRAND'S REFUSAL TO MEET WITH THE FRENCH PRESIDENT -- AS WOULD ANY NORMAL OPPOSITION LEADER IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY -- LEADS OPINION TO QUESTION WHY HE SHOULD BE RECEIVED BY FRIENDLY HEADS OF GOVERNMENT. I SAID THAT I WOULD AT SOME POINT BE MEETING WITH MITTERRAND, BUT ONLY AFTER I HAD MET WITH SEVERAL OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS AND THAT I WOULD TAKE
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CARE TO POINT OUT THAT THIS IS PART OF A NORMAL

PROCESS OF INFORMING MYSELF ON THE VIEWS OF FRENCH
POLITICIANS.
HARTMAN

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